

The Issues and Perspectives for Palm Oil as the Ingredient for Cosmetic Applications

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This study focuses on the palm oil as one of the most important ingredients for cosmetic and personal care (CPC) products. My approach is mainly based on social science, particularly economic and management, examining the view of palm oil producers toward their perspectives of CPC markets.

Palm oil is currently the largest in production volume among all oils and fats. This is because it is versatile in terms of applicability to a number of oils and fats-based products such as frying oil, margarine, shortening, confectionery, cocoa butter equivalent, detergent, biofuel and other edible as well as non-edible items. However, surprisingly, palm oil is the newest comer in these, including CPC, markets as it was not commercially developed until the late 1960s. This means palm development was highly successful to penetrate the markets above. Based on this historical background, this study intends to examine the interaction of palm development and the promise of CPC market.

My fieldwork was conducted for two weeks in Malaysia in March 2018, where several interviews and data collection were successfully completed. Malaysia was chosen as it used to be the largest palm oil producer (until 2005, surpassed by Indonesia) and still a global leader in palm oil-related technologies. MPOB, formerly named as PORIM, a government agency, continuously conducted intensive research and development efforts on palm oil related-technologies. CPC markets have been one of the most important targets for MPOB to penetrate, as its products are highly valued. Regarding the cosmetic application, two important technological developments have been witnessed; namely, technologies related to DHSAs (9,10-dihydroxystearic acid) and tocotrienol. These are exclusively palm-based and can be developed as functionality cosmetics. MPOB expects, due to its aesthetically appealing, multifunctional and safe nature, they should be welcomed by potential customers.

In conclusion, the markets for CPC products are highly promising for palm oil producers and suppliers; however, this study notices several issues remained.